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# ENGLISH B EXTENDED ESSAY

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**How does the norms of society affect the choices of marriage in early  
19th century after the Industrial revolution?**

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Throughout history, women have been considered as second-class members. Not only they didn't have any rights equal to men's, they have been socioeconomically abused. This abuse mainly caused by women's lack of presence in working fields. Industry is affected by the world's changes more than any other field, whoever was leading it, had the power. Women's job was considered to get married and take care of their houses so "in consequence there may have been relatively fewer opportunities and in particular married women to work in a part-time, casual or occasional fashion by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is therefore possibly that many women increasingly faced the stark alternatives of working full-time or not working at all."<sup>1</sup> After industrial revolution, women were treated as properties to be sold in exchange of money or social statue, preferably both because that seemed to be all of their use. Earning profit from marriage arrangements became a phenomenon in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The only way for a woman to achieve a high quality life was to get married; thus when it came to pick their husbands, women needed to put their feelings aside and got married to the man who could offer financial security. Men also had a materialistic approach towards marriage and they majorly considered marriage as a formality to satisfy the needs of the society. Society was cruel; they demanded sensationalistic marriages between suitable women and suitable men. Many times, women needed to pick the wealthiest men instead of the one they loved, and due to the norms of the society it was perfectly normal for a woman to get married to men they weren't attracted at all. Women looked for high social statue and wealth in men. Mostly, when they got married, they weren't attracted to their suitable husbands at all, so those marriages mostly led to miserable lives. 19<sup>th</sup> century writers Jane Austen and Emily Bronte criticize women's marriage choices that the society norms demand from individuals in their novels and they defended that the only way to be happy in one's life is to be with the one they love even if the society wouldn't approve it.

Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" and Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights" evaluates the marriage choices and their inevitable consequences in their books. Austen shows that love leads to happiness when pride and prejudice are once gotten over by telling the story of Darcy and Elizabeth. She also demonstrates the stereotype marriage of 19<sup>th</sup> century with Charlotte and Mr. Collins. She uses Lydia and Wickham's scandalous runaway, as well as their late and forced marriage to show the ignorance of ethics when it comes to marriage. With this example she also manages to show the society's eager enthusiasm to get married. On the other hand Bronte focuses more on the material decisions women make when its time for them to get married. She especially focuses on Catherine's dilemma, whether to follow love or security and she criticizes her choice's consequences. Moreover with Heathcliff and Catherine she also expresses that passion could be destructive too. Austen further demonstrates this character and his marriage opinions in order to show how Elizabeth is scattered from society since this idea is fully the antagonistic view of her ideals, to emphasize

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<sup>1</sup> P. K. O'Brien, R. E. Quinault, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 49

her statement about the norms of the society. Both writers offer exceptional perspectives towards nineteenth-century marriages and they support their arguments by telling stories of their area showing how unhappy people become once this stereotype of marriage established within the society.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte and Mr. Collins' marriage is corrupted, even in terms of the proposal itself. This marriage mainly illustrates a stereotype of unhappy marriage after the Industrial Revolution. Not only this marriage is not based on love or friendship at all, but also it is handled more like a business deal in the novel. Mr. Collins, who is the cousin of Bennet girls and the successor of the land the Bennet family lives on, arrives to Yorkshire to find a proper spouse. His propose to Charlotte is highly unexpected and inconvenient considering that he doesn't know her at all. In fact his proposal shows how superficial the relationships are even more. Charlotte's easy answer is also pointing at the values of society in terms of lack of feelings and depth between two people. When Charlotte says, "Not only all of us can afford being romantic Lizzie" <sup>2</sup> she illustrates that a woman has to think of her financial security first. Her speech to Elizabeth shows how ignorant women were towards feelings and that they consider comfort and security as a "catch". "...Mr. Collins character, connections, and situation in life" <sup>3</sup> This alliteration made by using words "Collins, character, connections" is illustrated in order to emphasize on the expectations of a woman from a marriage. She later on says "I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state." <sup>4</sup> in order to convince both Elizabeth and herself to show that she does not ask for anything else other than comfort from a marriage. This quotation shows the thinking pattern of 19<sup>th</sup> century woman in order to show how socially corrupted they are. Not only it suggests a reason for Charlotte's acceptance of proposal but also describe how desperate women who especially reach older ages than the other single girls search for not romance but only a man to take care of them. Jane Austen's main point in this novel is to show how love has secondary importance, and Charlotte is the example of a stereotype woman who is only eager to get married, as it is her "duty" and she lacks sensitivity. In fact she is astonished that Elizabeth doesn't approve this marriage, which enlarges the crack between the society's point of view, and Elizabeth's therefore Jane Austen's, showing her opposition towards these insensitive marriages. Charlotte is used to express the neediness, practical and materialistic woman described at the introduction. Her significance to the novel is that she is exactly the antagonist of Elizabeth. While Elizabeth serves as the anti-type of society's expectations, Charlotte is shown to describe how scattered Elizabeth is from the society's norms and she later uses her to prove this scatter is indispensable in order to be happy.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Red Classics, 2006, 140

<sup>3</sup> Austen, 140

<sup>4</sup> Austen, 140

On the other hand Mr. Collins explained her desires from a marriage when he proposed to Elizabeth,

My reasons for marrying are first that I think a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances to s<sup>3</sup>et the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness and thirdly which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier that it is the particular advice and recommendation of a very noble lady..... But the fact is that being as I am to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters that the loss to them might be as little as possible when the melancholy event takes place (Pride and Prejudice, 118, 119)<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, as it is obvious Mr. Collins first reason to get married is because society thinks every man should. Secondly, he thinks that would sum up to happiness even though he barely knows his future wife to be, and thirdly which is the only reason actually, he does it because an aristocrat who has power over the region he lives in he should get married. Moreover the later argument he suggested about the land and family shows that cousin-cross marriages are very common to share the inherited land. This quotation here serves to show the norms of society once more. It shows that marriage is seen as a concept that has only the function of being a "duty" to the society and the content doesn't matter at all. This superficial approach to the marriage is a stereotype in 19<sup>th</sup> century marriages and it leads the isolation of men and women from each other. Austen with this exemplification shows the pattern of getting married and men's point of view towards it. She uses this example later on to emphasis her previous statement, which is this marriage, will end up collapsing. The further illustration of this interaction between Elizabeth and Mr. Collins also used to emphasize on the societies norms. When Mrs. Bennet hears about her rejection she tells Mr. Collins that Lizzie will be brought to reason.<sup>6</sup> This consolation proves that the approach towards marriage is all about materialism, which causes a lousy, insignificant person such as Mr. Collins, become a Prince Charming in the eyes of society which proves the writer's first argument, love and attraction doesn't matter as long as social advantages for one exists.

In addition to all this consideration of marriage as a business agreement, another character of 19<sup>th</sup> century marriage is that it ignores ethics. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia is first illustrated a saucy spoiled girl that is so careless that she foreshadows that she'll get in trouble for sure. Mr. Wickham an army officer deceives Lydia to runaway with him for his personal benefits. This event causes an incredible scandal especially Mrs. Bennet worries about her daughter and her probably undignified future. Moreover, everyone considers Wickham as a filthy man with filthy ideas that almost a kidnapper. Then they get the letter about their marriage and everyone suddenly speaks of Wickham, as he is a noble man, good fellow and more importantly a suitable husband because of his position in army even though he took Lydia

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<sup>5</sup> Austen, 118-119

away without her parents' approval. Moreover Mrs. Bennet who earlier mourns about her daughter's scandal she starts to arrange wedding gifts.

After a slight preparation for good news the letter was read at loud. Mrs Bennet could hardly contain herself. .... My dear Lydia she cried –She will be married I shall see her again. She will be married at sixteen. My good kind brother! I knew he would manage everything. How I long to see her! And to see dear Wickham too!<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. Bennet illustrates here the ethical values of society. While Lydia's departure at first was scandalous and makes Wickham a kidnapper. The feedback of the people of Yorkshire is so affirmative it further emphasizes the degree of degeneration. Getting married is the most important element of one's life and no matter how undignified the path to marriage is, it is acceptable to follow that road. After hearing that they are married nothing they've ever done before that matters because marrying to a good, eligible spouse is powerful enough to fix every mistake one can make.

However, even though these greedy arrangements may seem to be resolving women's financial problems, they only function well because one parameter is left out in this equation, which is love. In 19<sup>th</sup> century women made believe that financial security will bring happiness along, though that is not the case all the time. Women who get married and leave the love behind will never find true happiness. Emily Bronte, in "Wuthering Heights" describes love as so powerful that it almost is a craving for another. Catherine and Heathcliff fall in love but they never confess their attraction to each other. When its time to get married, Catherine chooses money over her soul mate. Women's doubt in this choice is expressed in Catherine's words.

...and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, so he shall never know how I love him, and that not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning or frost from fire.<sup>7</sup>

As Catherine has put in words, even though she is desperately in love with Heathcliff, because of his financial condition and social statue she would never marry him because it wouldn't offer her decent quality of life. On the other hand, Edgar Linton who she is not in love with at all is very suitable even though they share nothing in common. Therefore, Catherine has to choose in between love and a decent lifestyle. In 19<sup>th</sup> century this seem to be the major conflict of women, and many of them have to make this choice. As it is expressed, money and love can't be in the same pot and usually women turn their backs to love to ensure their and their children future life and have a miserable life. Whenever, love is shut

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<sup>6</sup> Austen, 335

<sup>7</sup> E. Bronte, Wuthering Heights, Penguin Red Classics 2006, 95

down it will cause incurable damages in one's life. This concept of marriage is what is being criticized by both of the writer's the most, the ignorance towards love. The degeneration of feelings are so enormous that Catherine turns her back on love in order to obtain a financial security for herself and she is perfectly okay with it because that is what society defines as "normal". If Catherine chooses to be with Heathcliff the society would be shocked because no one cares about love and values it. Both writers try to show that, this kind of ignorance is not beneficial at all; in fact it is very deleterious and this is very common in women's lives.

Following Catherine's choice, Emily Bronte elaborates on her argument, marriage without love won't have any happiness in it. After her choice, Heathcliff leaves and disappears. Catherine who supposedly made the right choice devastates after his departure, and yet still gets married to Edgar. However, that marriage is completely miserable since the couple is not compatible at all. Then the writer makes her point, even after Catherine is safe financially, she is not in peace at all. Nelly and Edgar consecutively describe Catherine as more silent and calm after Heathcliff leaves. Catherine acts as if she lost a part of her and she doesn't enjoy life as much as she did before. Also she became even saucier and she is very mean to everyone around. She is recklessly rude and unhappy, while she is expected to find true happiness after marriage since she has a "perfect" life. Whenever Heathcliff returns, Catherine is revived and full of life again. "He took a seat opposite Catherine, who kept her gaze fixed on him as if she feared he would vanish were she to remove it."<sup>8</sup> Heathcliff's arrival is one of the few things Catherine is happy about. She was expected to be happily married to a man she doesn't love as many woman in 19<sup>th</sup> century were, however contrary the only happening that made her happy is her lover's return. Bronte here shows how insignificant money should be considered when it comes to marriage, depending on Catherine's reaction. The only way one can be truly satisfied is if she/he is with the one they are happy with, not they are with the one that has money. Passion plays the key role in happiness, and the reason Catherine is not happy is because she is not with the one she's in love with. "My love for Edgar is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary."<sup>9</sup> Here, Emily Bronte uses this simile by comparing Heathcliff and Edgar to rocks and woods. She tells that her feelings towards Heathcliff will always be there no matter how much she ignores it and she says like the rocks underneath give visible delight, being with Heathcliff will be the only way she'll ever be happy and her feelings for Edgar and his necessity will fade away by time. Bronte here shows that money and social rank should not be the main criteria when it comes to future happiness. Because Catherine is the vivid example of even though one can have all the money in world if she doesn't have someone that she loves next to her life will be miserable.

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<sup>8</sup> Bronte, 113

<sup>9</sup> Bronte, 97

Later on, Jane Austen implies that being mentally compatible is also a key to a happy marriage as a further addition to passion for each other, and this compatibleness helps the individual's to get over their differences and embrace their love for each other, ensuring a lifetime of happiness. Jane Austen shows that love, friendship and tolerance can help to embark difference between them and break the stereotype of marriage with Darcy and Elizabeth. Darcy is a rich aristocrat with incredible pride and a lot of prejudice to lower class so much that it blocks his feelings for Elizabeth for a while. On the hand Elizabeth herself, had so much pride of poor and prejudice towards nobles' arrogance that she is blind to her attraction to Darcy. However, Darcy manages to overcome his issues and gets over the supposed demands of society such as getting married to someone noble, or at least rich and he confesses his attraction to Elizabeth. While he first describes his feelings towards Elizabeth as ""She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me;"<sup>10</sup> when he overcomes his pride he confesses as "In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."<sup>11</sup> Darcy here shows that a man can love woman regardless her wealth or her social rank, which is Austen's main argument, love should be considered as the basic criteria when getting married. Sidewise, Elizabeth realizes her prejudice towards Darcy and they get together. When describing their relationship at the end of the book Austen emphasizes on a letter sent by Elizabeth to her mother in order to show how happy she is with Darcy, considering that when she is visiting Pemberley, Elizabeth depicted as a miserable girl. So love should be in the center of the choice of marriage and it provides a happier life to the one's that it is followed by.

Also in *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte illustrates same sort of resolution with Cathy and Hareton. Cathy is the reflection of Catherine and Hareton is Heathcliff's in the next generation. Cathy first makes the same mistake of getting married to someone she doesn't love just charmed by his social statue. Contrary to Catherine, her mother, Cathy realizes no matter what his statue or wealth is she can find peace, which will bring happiness along in someone she would be degraded by. She breaks the stereotype that Bronte described with the Catherine/Edgar marriage, which ended up miserably. Her affection to Hareton grows under this perspective.

"When this slight disagreement was over, they were thick again, and as busy possible, in their several occupations of pupil and teacher...His honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred: and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Austen, 12

<sup>11</sup> Austen, 210

<sup>12</sup> Bronte, 376



While Catherine Earnshaw thinks that marrying to Heathcliff would degrade him, Cathy doesn't think that way in fact she resolves Hareton's degradation and helps him which leads to a love to grow in between. Therefore the problems in the first generation are resolved in the second by showing that nothing can break apart love. While Bronte depicted the first marriage to show how miserable those marriages can become, once those norms of the society are gotten over, happiness waits. Same argument is emphasized by Heathcliff's actions who nearly broke off the marriage of Catherine and Edgar, but he later says that no matter what he does once two people are attached nothing can come between them after seeing Cathy and Hareton. There is no way Cathy and Hareton would be miserable after they accept their affection and friendship no matter what Heathcliff does. So love wins in all cases.

To conclude, after industrial revolution marriage became a business agreement. On the other hand, men needed to find a suitable woman to make their children's mother who preferably has the same social rank. However, no matter how rich and socially high one man is, unless the marriage has love in it, it would be inevitable that it is filled with misery. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen are both novels that express the norms that are imposed by the society about marriage. Both writers observed the demands of society from individual about their choices of marriage and they saw they end up miserably because they have no love or friendship in them. While Austen describes the unhealthy marriages consequences by using Mr. Collins' materialistic marriage proposal, Charlotte's love lacking marriage, Lydia and Wickham's scandal, she also shows how is the embrace of affection and friendship resulted by illustrating the struggled relationship of Darcy and Elizabeth. On the other hand, in *Wuthering Heights* Bronte expresses the same norms starting with Heathcliff, Edgar, and Catherine triangle. After her decision of money over love, Catherine Earnshaw has to pursue a miserable life, which is completely empty and loses every good quality she has over the money she got by marrying Edgar. The writer shows the vicious cycle that involves making the same mistakes over and over again, by the example of Linton and Cathy. However, just like Austen did with Darcy and Elizabeth she also breaks the cycle of materialistic values by the example of Hareton and Cathy who are the reflections of Heathcliff and Catherine in the next generation. Both novels, by the end, supports not the norms imposed by the society but love in order to have a happy marriage that is filled with joy. Eventually the stereotype of 19<sup>th</sup> century marriage is rejected by both of the others, which funnily are individuals from the same century.

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